MALAY POLITICS IN SARAWAK 1946 - 1966

The Search for Unity and Political Ascendancy

SANIB SAID

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1946-1966

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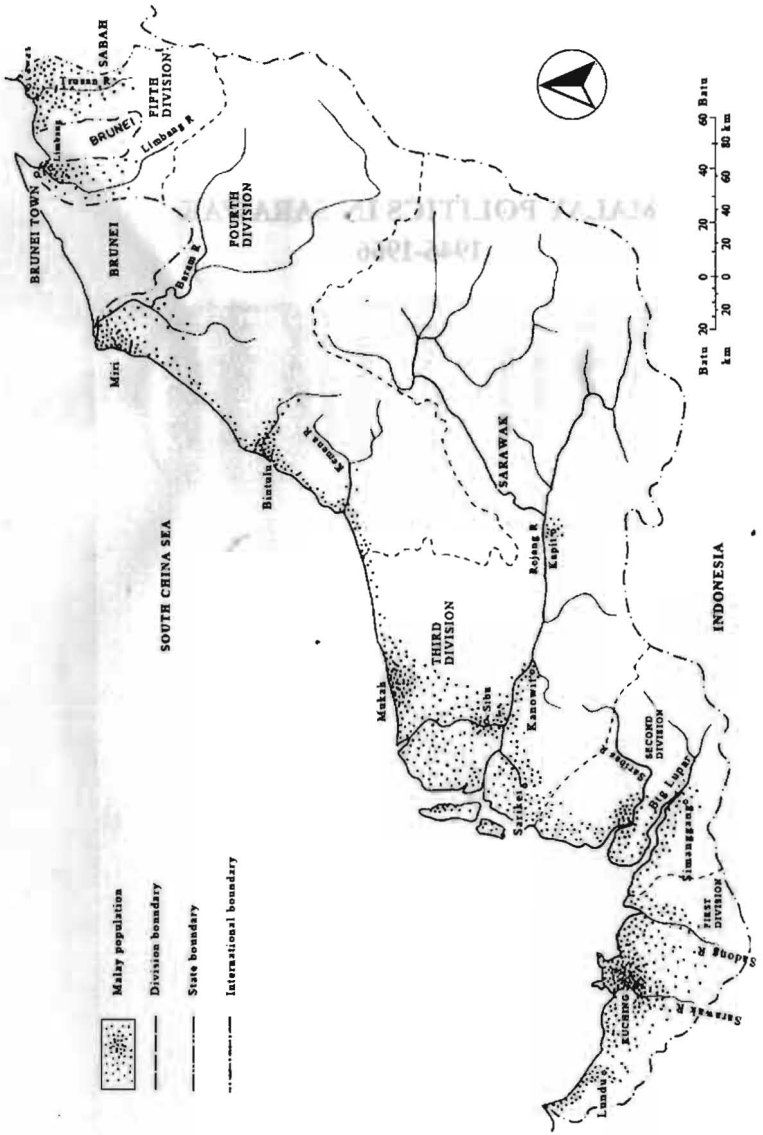

Distribution of Malays Population in Sarawak

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AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION TO THE REPRINT EDITION BY UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK

I remembered how excited I was when this book was first published twenty-five years ago. It was my first book and offers a very rare glimpse on the Malays of Sarawak at that particular time. In retrospection, I find it now a very modest work; an attempt to interpret the turbulence period written with an embryonic historical mind and with few scholars and books for reference and guidance.

Suggestions for a reprint were mooted by fellow book lovers. Some even suggest a sequel to bring my narrative to the contemporary period. That failed to inspire me. In addition, my interest has somewhat changed and while with the Sarawak Museum, I found myself, looking not on politics but instead locking my gaze into the remote past of the Malays through fast fading memories and lost manuscripts as I search their origin and civilization.

Now that I am back in the academic world, I realised that the book is still relevant and thus agreed to have it reprinted by Universiti Malaysia Sarawak; the academic community, students and researchers apparently still refer to my book. As I surfed for information regarding the book on the net, I found the book in the shelf of many university libraries around the world, and I must admit, I felt much elated when several local academics and university students confided their admiration. But from another perspective, this may also imply the scarcity of written works on the Malays in Sarawak, revealling how little has really changed since I first written my book. Nonetheless, I felt compelled to mention the written work of a few former government officers and younger scholars such as Dr. Suffian Mansor, Norde Achi, Dr. Awang Azman Awang Pawi and Dr. Mohd. Faisal Syam Abdol Hazis.

Being the inheritors of an ancient negeri, such as Sarawak, Samarahan, Saribas, Kalaka and Malanau (as recorded in several sources) and later the great kingdom of Brunei (long before James Brooke came in 1841), the Malays have a proud history. It was the need to fill the lacunae on the Malay of Sarawak that first inspired me to study their modern political history. And one of the obstacles that immediately confronted me as a researcher is the definition of the Malays itself.

This is further compounded, perhaps by the famous phrase, masuk Melayu, which literally means to become Malays. Tom Harrisson, a British guerrilla during the World War II and later the Curator of the Sarawak Museum, studied the Malays and thought that the Malays were Dayaks who converted to Islam. And recently, the term "contesting" Malays attracted many scholars to the debate and has now becoming a cliché.

When I wrote that the Malays in Sarawak are a heterogeneous community, some interpreted that I held a similar view to the present interest on "contesting" Malays without taking into account a recent study on human genome by Stephen Oppenheimeir which is found in The Journey of Mankind. But after having revisited The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II (1973) by Fernand Braudel, my earlier thought diverged. Fernand Braudel, a famous modern historian of the Annales, took the concepts longue durée and courté durée, and core and periphery in his approach of using cultural and geographical zones.

In the ancient times, before the western colonial occupation and before the present nation-states, there was this world called the Malay World or the Malay Archipelago, similar to the existence of other world such as the Western World and the Arab World. The people of the Malay World were the Malays, a term used as early as 670 AD in the Srivijaya Empire. So in contrast with the previous view, the Dayaks are the Malays who remained non-Moslems, and the Malays are essentially the Malays, who were once followers of Hinduism and Buddhism, that have embraced Islam since the 14th century. The Malays of Sarawak as one of the Malay cultural zones may resemble the idea of Malay Civilization which existed in the Malay Archipelago of the Malay World – to echo Fernand Braudel's Mediterranean.

Looking to the future after my Epilogue in 1978, I sounded very Rankean in my approach as I ended my narrative with the theme, "in search of unity and ascendancy". From the longue durée view, the Malays struggled to recapture their glorious past of various ancient kingdoms after a long period of influence from the great Indian and Chinese civilizations that came in through the Strait of Melaka; attracted by the abundance of spices that created the world super-economy of that time.

A stronghold was created with the formation of Parti Bumiputera in 1966 and which later expanded with the merger with the Iban party, Pesaka, in 1973 to formed Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB). After it was tested by PAJAR in 1978, a more damaging split occurred during the Ming Crisis in 1987 when PBB was challenged by a new party, PERMAS. Although it prevails, the community continues to be divided and this is further aggravated by the expansion of political parties from the Peninsula Malaysia, viz., Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) and Parti KeAdilan Rakyat (PKR) through the 1998, 2003 and 2008 general elections.

With the passing of the old generation, the pillar of Malay unity which was based on common ancient history and bitter political struggle quickly faded from the memories of the younger independent generation who grew with modern comfort and facilities. This is also partly instigated by aggressive partisan politics from the Peninsula and the new form of media interaction in the internet which comes in the forms of many personal and uncensored blogs. This is a new world and it will become an important factor in Malay politics in the future.

The Second Edition should be an easier endeavour than the first but it is the support and the belief of colleagues in the University Malaysia Sarawak that finally convinced me of its merit. Hence I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Dr. Khairuddin Ab Hamid, the Vice-Chancellor of UNIMAS for his support; Professor Abdul Halim Ali, who then held the Chair for Nusantara Studies and was the Director of the Institute of East Asian Studies, UNIMAS, for his tireless persuasion during many of our luncheon discourses; and my thanks to Professor Dr. Fatimah Abang who heads the Publication Committee and Professor Datuk Dr. Abdul Rashid Abdullah, who is now the Director of the Institute of East Asian Studies. I sincerely hope that this book will bring much insight to its readers.

Datu Hj. Sanib bin Hj. Said
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Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.

FOREWORD

It would not be far-fetched to say that Malaysian politics has proved to be of compelling interest to many scholars. For a nation so small in size, the amount published on Malaysian politics has been quite substantial. But, in general, scholars have been more interested in Malaysia's national rather than local politics. Kelantan alone has attracted comparatively more attention than the other Peninsular states. Sabah and Sarawak have likewise been studied, but there are important gaps to be filled.

In the case of Sarawak, Michael Leigh's *The Rising Moon: Political Change in Sarawak* has been the only work which provides the kind of perception and analysis which scholars find invaluable. But Michael Leigh's study strictly begins from 1959 whereas a great deal had happened since the Second World War ended. Lately, R. H. W. Reece's *The Name of Brooke: The End of White Rajah Rule in Sarawak,* to some extent, has helped to throw light on an important aspect of the political history of modern Sarawak-the Anti-Cession Movement.

Sarawak, like Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah, has a multi-ethnic population. Ethnicity is therefore also a significant facet of its politics. But, important as it is to understand inter-ethnic politics, such understanding would be grossly inadequate without first a proper understanding of intra-ethnic Politics.

In Sarawak today, numerically the Ibans form the largest group followed by the Chinese. Compared to these two, the Malays are a by far smaller group. But since the time of the Brooke regime the Malays have enjoyed a high place in Sarawak society They have been the most educated, the most vocal and the first to participate in political activity. And the Malay Parti Bumiputera in Sarawak today occupies a position of power and consequence similar to that of the UMNO in Peninsular Malaysia.

Sanib Said's study of *Malay Politics in Sarawak 1946-1966* is hence a work of the utmost importance. It does not merely elucidate the nature of the power struggle within Sarawak Malay Society, but in the process explains how the Malays have been able to achieve their position of ascendancy in Sarawak politics.

Sarawak has continued to prove somewhat of an enigma to many, its society is complex; its history not well-known except that which relates to the administration of the Brooke family. It is to be hoped that Sanib Said's book will succeed in forging a new perception of Sarawak history and society which will lead to many more similar studies.

University of Malaya KHOO KAY KIM
Kuala Lumpur Professor of Malaysian History
May 1984

PREFACE

A visiting American lecturer once confided that his research interest in this little known state of Sarawak was spurred by an intense curiosity about the Brookes, the so-called 'White Rajahs'. This is also true for many European scholars who have written historical studies on Sarawak, with the Brookes as the main subject. Many other aspects of the history of Sarawak have been neglected because of this obsession. One group which has received little attention from researchers are the Malays. For those Europeans who monopolized research activities until very recently the Malays were neither as 'exotic' as the Iban nor as 'adventurous' as the immigrant Chinese. However, in fact the Malays played a significant role under Brooke rule, as indeed they continue to do today.

The aim of this book is to trace and discuss the evolution of Malay politics in Sarawak between 1946 and 1966 in particular. Emphasis is placed on intra-communal politics. However, whenever relevant, inter-communal problems are discussed as well. Malay politics during this period was primarily a struggle for power between the young intelligentsia (of the First and Third Division) and the aristocrats of the First Division. In 1946 the rivalry between the two factions came to a head over the Cession issue, and became so intense that the Malay community was completely divided. In the ensuing years until 1966, Malay leaders tried to reunite the community as inter-communal politics assumed greater importance, for politics was no longer the monopoly of the Malays Linder the new British colonial regime in Sarawak. The attempt to unite the Malays had already failed several times when the issue of the formation of Malaysia arose in 1961. The search for unity was finally successful when Parti Bumiputera was formed to accommodate both the intelligentsia and the aristocrats in 1966.

This book is a revised version of an MA thesis submitted to the University of Malaya in 1980. The genesis of this work, however, can be traced back to my undergraduate years at the same university. The stimulating lectures on Malaysian (Peninsula) historiography, especially the lively debates on the Malaysian-centric as opposed to European-centric approach, opened up new perspectives on Sarawak historiography. This work was also undertaken in the hope of contributing something in a small way to fill certain gaps in our understanding of the Malays of Sarawak.

In completing this work I have received assistance from various institutions and individuals. To Professor Khoo Kay Kim of the History Department, University of Malaya, I must tender my sincere gratitude for sparing his precious time to guide me during the initial and the final stages of writing the thesis and for being kind enough to write the Foreword for this book. I also wish to thank Dr Amarjit Kaur and Ranjit Singh of the History Department, University of Malaya, for their unselfish assistance, particularly in reading through the text and offering suggestions for revision. I am also grateful to Dr Michael B. Leigh, Sydney University, Australia, and Haji Zaini Ahmad of Yayasan Sabah, Kuala Lumpur, for offering comments and valuable criticism which have proved most useful in the preparation of this book. Malek Munip, History Department, University of Malaya, who acted as my supervisor, also deserves my thanks.

The other members of the History Department, University of Malaya, especially Professors J. Chandran, R. Bonney, Fadil Othman, and Abdullah Zakaria, all contributed individually to the completion of this work. My former colleagues in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, namely Mahmud Embong, Sanat Nasir, Basri Bahron and Francis Jana Lian, gave me encouragement throughout the years in the campus, I must also thank Mrs Lau Beng Thye for typing the manuscript.

Back home in Sarawak, my thanks are due to Abang Han Ahmad, Ali Tready, Ganie Ugay, Rashidi Sepawi, Safri Awang Zaidell, Ahmad Zaidi,

and many others for facilitating my stay in Kuching. I wish to mention in gratitude my elder brother, Sani Said who continuously gave financial and moral support during my undergraduate and postgraduate years.

The following institutions, namely Perpustakaan Universiti Malaya, Arkib Negara, Sarawak Museum Archives and Sarawak Civil Service Training Centre, extended kind co-operation. For financial support I wish to acknowledge with thanks the University of Malaya for offering a research grant which facilitated several trips to Sarawak.

I am most grateful to my wife, Fatimah Abdul Malek, who withstood separation and anxiently whilst I was engaged on writing this book, and who also acted as my research assistant.

Needless to say, I am wholly responsible for the opinions expressed in this book, as well as for the shortcomings it may contains.

Kuala Lumpur SANIB SAID
May1984

ABBREVIATIONS

Political

ABAS	Angkatan Bintawa-Astana Sarawak
BARJASA	Barisan Anak Jati Sarawak
BINA	Angkatan Nahdatul Islam Bersatu
BPS	Barisan Pemuda Sarawak
CCO	Clandestine Communist Organization
KMC	Kuching Municipal Council
MACHINDA	Malay Chinese Dayak Party
MBHT	Muhibah Bintangor Haji Taha Association
NEP	New Economic Policy
NKKU	Negara Kesatuan Kalimantan Utara
PAJAR	Parti Anak Jati Sarawak
PANAS	Parti Negara Sarawak
PBB	Pesaka-Bumiputera Sarawak
PKMS	Persatuan Kebangsaan Melayu Sarawak
PMS	Persatuan Melayu Sarawak
PPMI	Persatuan Pemuda Melayu Insaf
PPMS	Pergerakan Pemuda Melayu Sibu
PRB	Partai Rakyat Brunei
SCA	Sarawak Chinese Association
SDA	Sarawak Dayak Association
SNA	Sarawak Native Association
SNAP	Sarawak National Party
SUF	Sarawak United Front
SUPP	Sarawak United Peoples' Party
TNKU	Tentera Nasional Kalimantan Utara
UMNO	United Malays National Organization
USNA	United Sarawak National Association (Singapore)
YMA	Young Malay Association

Literary

BLB	Borneo Literary Bureau
BMJ	*Brunei Museum Journal*
JMBRAS	*Journal of the Malayan/ Malaysia Branch of the royal Asiatic Society*
JMHSS	*Journal of the Malaysian Historical Society, Sarawak*
JSEAS	*Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*
SG	*Sarawak Gazette*
SGG	*Sarawak Government Gazette*
SMJ	*Sarawak Museum Journal*

GLOSARY

abang/awang	aristocratic titles
adat	custom/tradition
datu	non-royal Malay chieftain
haj	the pilgrimage to Mecca
haji	one who has completed the pilgrimage
kampung	Malay/Melanau village
kapitan cina	Chinese headman
mufti	State Islamic leader
nakhoda	a sea-captain (usually Arab)
pengiran	title signifying connection with Brunei royalty
perabangan	the aristocracy (abang class)
persatuan	association/society

NOTE

Throughout this book the term 'Dayak' has been used in a general sense to refer to the indigenous peoples of Sarawak including the Iban but excluding the Malays. Similarly the Malay term '*bumiputera*' has been used in a general sense to refer collectively to all the indigenous peoples of Sarawak *including* the Malays: this term has been in current use since Sarawak's merger into Malaysia.

1
THE MALAYS OF SARAWAK

HISTORICALLY the term 'Sarawak' refers to two different entities, an old and a new. 'Old Sarawak' was a province of the Brunei sultanate from 1476 to 1841. It covered the Sarawak River valley in the north-western corner of the island of Borneo, facing the South China Sea. 'New Sarawak', on the other hand, refers to the kingdom of the Brooke (English) family which ruled the country from 1841 to 1941. The Brookes sultanate's territories that were spread over about two-third of the north-western coast of Borneo from Tanjung Datu in the south to the Lawas River in the north. In 1946 'New Sarawak' was ceded to Britain to become a Crown Colony and in 1963 it joined the Federation of Malaysia and became one of the thirteen states of the new nation. Kuching, in the heart of the 'Old Sarawak', remained the capital of the new state.

Little is known of the early history of Sarawak until it came under the Brunei sultanate in the late fifteenth century. The earliest mention of it appears in 1365 in Rakawi Prapanca's *Negarakertagama*, called Sawaku, it was said to be the tributary states of the Majapahit Empire on the northern coast of Borneo.[1] After that, nothing is heard about Sarawak until it is mentioned in greater detail in the *Silsilah Raja-Raja Berunai*. The *Silsilah* says:

> There was once a country called Johor. It was during the reign of Sultan Bahteri when Awang Alak Betatar and Pateh Merbai from the country of Brunei called to Johor. When Awang Alak Betatar arrived, he was named Sultan who was the first king Of Brunei and the Pateh was given the title Pengeran Bendahara Sri Maharaja. As a result the Sultan was conferred by the Yang diPertuan Johor with the royal regalia and five provinces of Kalaka and Saribas and Samarahan and Sarawak and Mukah.

After the fall of the Majapahit Empire in the fifteenth century, Sarawak and its neighbouring *negeri* probably came under the overlordship of Johor. Then, the rule of the Brunei sultans became effective in Sarawak from the reign of Brunei's first ruler, Sultan Muhammad, in 1476.[3]

The capital of the Brunei Sultanate was at Kota Batu situated on the lower reaches of the Brunei River which drains into Brunei Bay, about 400 miles to the north-east of Sarawak. The Brunei sultanate laid down a systematic system of administration to control its vast empire which was divided into *numerous jajahan (districts).* For administrative purposes, these territories were grouped under three categories: *kerajaan,* appanages of the sultan; *kuripan,* appanages ages of other officials and *tulin,* private hereditary domains.[4]

Sarawak came under the first category. As a *kerajaan,* the administration of Sarawak was delegated by the sultan to local chiefs who had been bestowed with aristocratic titles, namely, *Datu Patinggi, Datu Bandar* and *Datu Temengong.*[5] The division of administrative duties was clearly stated in an old document, which was translated into English by the Brookes, and referred to by them:

> The Orang Bunsi are governed by the Patinggi.
> The Awang-Awang are governed by the Bandar.
> The Hamba Rajah are governed by the Temenggong.
> The right hand as well as the left hand rivers, and the various Dayak [*sic*] tribes residing in them with the exception of Ningy on the right hand, and Li Nankang and Thana oil the left, are governed by the Patinggi. Lingey, a Dyak *[sic]* tribe, on the right hand river; and Li Nankan and Thana, Dyak *[sic]* tribes, on the left hand river, are governed by the Bandar; towards the sea, and the Dyak [sic] there residing, are governed by the Temenggong.[6]

It may be inferred from the document that the administration of the Brunei Sultanate was highly decentralized. In the case of Sarawak the sultan ruled the territory indirectly through these three local officials.

Of the three, the Datu Patinggi was the highest, then the Bandar, followed by the Temenggong. However, their duties and rights were more or less the same, the difference lying in the social status of the people they governed. The Patinggi had jurisdiction over the nobility (the orang *Bunsi).* The Bandar governed the nonnobility of high status, the Awang-Awang. Lower down the line, the Temenggong ruled the *hamba raja*–commoners. The Dayak, however, were governed by their own leaders according to their place of residence.

Since it was a *kerajaan,* Sarawak was fortunate to escape from the oppression that was rife in the kuripan and *tulin* which were at the personal mercy of the owners, the *pengiran.*[7] Each pengiran resorted to harsh rule by means of various extortionate taxes in order to maintain his large family of wives, *gundik* (concubines) and followers.[8] In Sarawak, the responsibilities of the local chiefs were to maintain law and order and to collect taxes. Petty crimes such as failure to pay taxes and theft were dealt with by them as well. Only serious crimes were sent to Kota Batu the capital of Brunei. According to Peter Leys:

> Persons charged with crimes, the punishment for which would be death or mutilation, are tried by the Pengiran Temenggong in Brunei [Kota Batu], and the Sultan's approval had to be obtained before the punishment is inflicted. The Brunei authorities are extremely dilatory in examining into civil and criminal cases, but when the case is taken tip it is gone into very thoroughly and usually a very sensible verdict is found.[9]

Although this applied specifically to the *kuripan* and *tulin,* it could be said to reflect generally the situation in a *kerajaan,* too, such as in the case of' Sarawak.

The main responsibility of the Patinggi, Bandar and Temenggong appeared to be the collection of taxes. Three categories of tax were imposed upon the people. The first consisted of personal or direct taxes[10] which included the poll tax, *chukai dagang, chukai serah, chukai basoh betis, chukai bongkal sauh* and *chukai tolongan.* Poll tax was paid annually.

Chukai dagang (trade tax) had to be paid annually before any individual or a family was allowed to trade. *Chukai serah* ('surrender' tax')[11] had to be paid annually too. When a chief visited a locality, the inhabitants had to pay a tax known as *chukai basoh* betis (literally 'washing the leg' tax) and when he left *chukai bongkal sauh* (literally 'weighing the anchor' tax). *Chukai tolongan* (requisition tax) was as a compulsory contribution towards any function held by the chief; this tax, however, applied to the inhabitants of a *kuripan* or a *tulin* but not to those in a *kerajaan.* On the other hand, the Patinggi, Bandar and Temenggong had similar obligations to the sultan.

The second category of tax was import duties. In general these were very low. [12] The third category was export duties. The main exports under Brunei rule were jungle products such as rattan, camphor, birds' nests and *jelutong (wild* latex) which were mostly collected mainly by the Dayak. The laws of Brunei stipulated that a duty of one dollar had to be paid lot every ton of goods traded. However, what actually took place was totally different. Çhiefs controlling the rivers would impose a duty of 10 per cent on goods that passed through their domains. Most of the exporters were *nakhoda* (i.e., foreigners, usually Arab sea-captains) who traded with the Dayak. In order it) compensate for the loss of revenue as a result of the high export duty paid to the river chiefs, the *nakhoda* had to buy their goods very cheaply from the Dayak. This was seen as a form of commercial 'oppression' by the Brooke government, which followed.

The Patinggi, Bandar and Temenggong in Sarawak appear to have enjoyed a great deal of autonomy. It is not known whether they gave a certain portion of the revenues collected to the Sultan, or kept all for themselves. What is known for certain is that they had numerous obligations to the Brunei ruler. This is recorded in the *Silsilah Raja-Raja Berunai.* They not only had to give annual tribute but also discharged many other special obligations. The annual tribute comprised of war boat and 800 *pasu* (barrels) of padi. The special obligations were onerous. Upon the appointment of a Patinggi, seven slaves had to be presentedl; in the case of the Bandar six slaves, and in that of the Temenggong, three.[13] When they visited Kota Batu, the Patinggi and Bandar had to present a bolt of cloth together with *chelari* (silk cloth embroidered with gold thread).[14] Such pilgrimages to the capital might be necessary to renew their tenure of office and to confirm their loyalty on to the sultan. Other than this, the chiefs of Sarawak suffered little interference from the sultan or his pengiran.

The Malays were largely found in the coastal region of Sarawak that faced the South China Sea, spread sparsely along the 400 miles of coastline.[15] The large majority, however, were located in the Sarawak, Rejang, and Limbang-Lawas river systems. Apart from a common adherence to the religion of Islam, the Malays of Sarawak were a heterogenous community. The origin of the Sarawak Malays is still obscure and controversial. There are two schools of thought. The first holds that they were mainly composed of immigrants from Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. Their argument runs that cultural similarites between the Malays of Sarawak and those in Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula indicate mass migrations.[16] A supporter of this view originated from an ethnic group called *Abung* in Lampong, Sumatera. He dismisses the idea that the Malays had significant blood ties with the head-hunting Dayak and regards this opinion as the wild imagination of those who support the second school of thought.[18]

While the presence of Sumatran and Peninsular Malays in Sarawak is undeniable, there is no strong evidence to suggest that mass migrations ever took place. There are a number of immigrant Malaysian settlements in Sarawak as the following names indicate: Kampung Boyan, Kampung Jawa, Kampung Gersik. [19] However, these *kampung* are more likely to be of recent origin because they were not known before the arrival of James Brooke in 1839. [20] Another problem relates to the origin of

the title 'abang'. It would appear somewhat imaginative to say that it is derived from the *Abung* tribe merely because, like the Dayak of Sarawak, they practised head-hunting.[21] The title abang might simply mean 'Encik' or 'Mr'. In fact it is more likely to have been the creation of James Brooke who wanted to create a new aristocracy in opposition to the traditional Brunei ruling class (namely those who employed the title pengiran or awang).[22] There is insufficient evidence to substantiate the argument of the first school of thought.

The second school of thought is more convincing. Essentially it traces the root of the majority of the Malays to the early Dayak [23] settlers on the northern coast of Borneo. With the acceptance of Islam as the new religion of Brunei, considerable numbers of Iban, Bidayuh, Melanau and other smaller tribes embraced Islam and so *'masuk Melayu'*, meaning 'to become Malays'.[24] Subsequently they constituted the dominant group in Malay society. Tom Harrisson, former Government Ethnologist and Curator of the Sarawak Museum, pioneered the second school of thought. According to him:

> ... [the] Sarawak Malays do not to any significant degree represent any kind of evolutionary group or even relic of a distinct 'Malay' people who came in from the 'West' within memory, or before. Rather they reflect the movements of a few authoritative, aristocratic or able *(guru,* trader, etc.) Moslems–not necessarily always from Malaya or elsewhere in Indonesia. These individuals or small groups converted or led local indigenous population, or part therefore, to embrace Islam, become *Moslems,* and thus in latter–day terminology *masuk* Melayu, become Malay.[25]

It is significant that the second school of thought does not reject the presence of Malaysian immigrants, in the Malay community.

There is evidence to support the validity of the second of thought. During the rule of the Brunei sultanate, a few small tribes were converted to Islam and eventually absorbed into Malay society. Perhaps one of

the earliest of these tribes to 'masuk Melayu' were the Seru who were found to be in the upper reaches of the Saribas River.[26] The Seru were a weak tribe and were usually the victims of the Iban head-hunters and tribal warfare. With the coming of the Malays, the Seru sought protection from these new and respected arrivals.[27] Subsequently, many Seru women married Malays and finally the whole tribe became Muslim and, thus, 'Malay'. The same occurred among the Bliun of Rejang [28] and the Miri of Baram.[29] All these tribes had almost become extinct by the early nineteenth century.

Two larger tribes, the Melanau and Kedayan, however, were only partially assimilated into the Malay community. The Melanau were predominantly found in the lower Rejang valley which was rich in sago and to a certain extent gold.[30] That area became one of the Brunei sultanate's most important *jajahan* in northern Borneo because of the abundance of sago. Sago was not only the staple food but also served as an important export item, more valuable than other commodities even during the early period of Brooke rule.[31] Because of its economic importance, Brunei sent its pengiran to the Melanau country. Subsequently many of the pengiran married Melanau girls, known for their beauty, and many of whom also became *gundik.*[32] This was soon followed by the mass conversion of the Melanau longhouses to Islam. As a result of these marriages, a new breed of aristocrat emerged in Melanau society bearing the titles of *pengiran, awangku* and *dayangku.*[33] The partial conversion of the Melanau to Islam placed them in a difficult position. Although they called themselves, and were called by others 'Malays', they could still identify themselves with the non-Muslim Melanau who continued to retain their original culture. Significantly, however, they differed from the Dayak and had more similarities with the true Malays. The Iban called the Melanau (as they did the Malays) *Orang Laut* (sea people) because they were coastal dwellers, who had only recently discarded their longhouse dwellings and resorted to living

in separate houses like the Malays. The Melanau, therefore, identified themselves more with the Malays than with the Dayak, the *Orang Darat* (land people) of Sarawak.

The Kedayan was another tribe that rejected wholesale assimilation into the Malay community. They were predominantly found on the Limbang-Lawas river system and in Sibuti, and formed a large portion of the Muslims in these areas. They were one of the earliest people of northern Borneo to accept Islam *en bloc*.[34] But despite the fact that the Kedayan are all Muslims, they have remained very 'unMalay' as compared to other Muslim groups. They refer to themselves proudly and are referred to by the Malays as 'Kedayan'. Nevertheless, their dialect is basically Malay and they live in separate houses in closely-knit villages. They are largely wet padi planters and perhaps the first indigenous group to employ this technology in northern Borneo.[35]

The descendants of Arab traders and missionaries formed an alien element in Malay society in Sarawak. Although they constituted only a very small section of the Malays, their political and religious standing was very high in Malay society. They were already present in northern Borneo during the early period of the Brunei sultanate in the sixteenth century. In fact, the third sultan of Brunei was an Arab by the name of Ali.[36] Many of their descendants later became river chieftains bearing the title sharif, and later *tuanku*.[37] The other Malay group on the Limbang-Lawas river system were the Brunei Malays. Culturally they were Malay and distinguished from the rest by the fact that they were attached politically to the Brunei sultanate more closely than any other Malay group.

From the preceding discussion, it is clear that Malay society in Sarawak was heterogenous. Through conversion to Islam, a number of ethnic groups were absorbed into Malay society and brought with them their own cultural heritage. Although they could all understand Malay, they retained their own local dialects. Despite these differences they were bound together by Islam which managed to accommodate the

various cultures, promoting thereby peaceful co-existence and unity. This and the fact that the Malays were a maritime people separated them from the Dayaks who were not Muslims and lived inland.

However diverse the Malays of Sarawak were, they could generally be divided into four social classes,[38] based on socio-economic factors; these classes were the aristocracy, the middle class, peasants, and slaves. The aristocrats, at the top of the social pyramid, were the rulers and religious leaders. However, they were not all of common origin, since regionalism allowed separate characteristics. In the Sarawak River system, they were called the *perabangan*, that is, Malays bearing the title of *abang*, led by the Datu Patinggi, Datu Bandar and Datu Temenggong. In the Rejang River system, the ruling class either bore the title pengiran or tuanku. Pengiran was commonly used among the Melanau who had inherited the title from the Brunei aristocracy through inter-marriage and had masuk *Melayu*. The tuanku were the descendants of Arab traders and missionaries, found further inland from the Melanau. In the Limbang-Lawas river area, the aristocrats were Brunei pengiran.

The middle class of traditional Malay society was composed of international traders. They were known as nakhoda (literally ship's captain). Their enterprises made them the wealthiest segment of Malay society and therefore highly respected. Because of their travels, the nakhoda were known for their deep knowledge of Islam and of world affairs; they gradually emerged as the educated elite amongst the Malays.

The greater part of the Malay population was the peasantry. Contrary to common belief, this class was not entirely made up of poor agriculturists and fishermen. In Sarawak, the peasant class largely comprised petty riverine traders and to a lesser extent agriculturists. The petty traders were mainly involved in riverine trade with the Dayak of the interior. They bartered salt, beads and cloth for jungle products such as rattan, camphor, gambier and damar. In the Rejang and Limbang-Lawas river systems, they were mainly sago planters.

The slaves and *gundik* formed the lowest class. They constituted only a small section of the Malays. Their function in-society was restricted to serving their masters, the aristocrats. They performed every kind of domestic chore.

The power base of traditional Malay society was interwoven with the administrative and economic systems. The strong symbol of any chief's authority was derived from the sanction of the Sultan of Brunei. Without this, no chief could ever gain the support and respect of the population, be it Malay or Dayak. Upon the appointment of a chief, his main duty was to collect taxes, of which he kept a certain portion for himself. In most cases the chief would set up his residence at a strategic site at the lower reaches of a river system where he could control the flow of overseas and riverine trade and collect the custom duties. With his wealth he could maintain large and loyal followers who were needed to administer his territory.

In some cases Malay chiefs were found further inland in Iban country. Here, a chief's authority depended on his relations with the local lbans. By collecting taxes that were reasonable, the lbans could be controlled. Besides this, the lbans also feared the magical powers of the Malay chief. They did not challenge Malay authority, probably because they were fragmented as a result of warfare among themselves. In the early nineteenth century a new relationship between the Malay chiefs and the Iban developed when piracy' became rife in the waters of Borneo.[39] In these activities, marauding Malays took the lead and the spoils were divided amongst the participants. However, the Malays went for goods with a market value, while the Iban preferred fighting for prestige, symbolized by the collecting of human heads. It was this alliance that was regarded as a serious political threat by the Brookes.[40]

What has been outlined above is a general picture of Malay society in Sarawak in the first-half of the nineteenth century. This picture gradually changed with the establishment of' the alien regime of the

Brookes, beginning from 1841. Significantly, however, Brooke rule did not constitute a strong modernizing agent, for numerous traditional elements continued to be present in Malay society, and these influenced Malay politics for a very long period.

1. T. Pigeaud, *Java in the Fourteenth Century,* The Hague, 1960, p. 1 6.

2. A. Sweetie), 'Silsilah Raja-Raja Berunai, Text A & B'. *JMBRAS*, XLI, 2, December 1968, p. 52. There is another version of the silsilah in English, see Mohd. Jamil Umar, 'Islam in Brunei', *BMJ*, IV, i, 1977, pp. 35 -42. This and subsequent translations are the author's,

3. Sweeney , op. cit., p. 70.

4. D.E. Brown, 'Socio-Political History of Brunei A Bornean Malay Sultanate' Ph. D. thesis, 1969, pp. 163 - 75.

5. Ibid.; see also Sweeney, op. cit., and P. Leys, 'Observations on the Brunei Political System, 1883- 1885', *JMBRAS*, XLI, Pt. 2, December 1968, pp. 117 30.

6. J C. Templer, *The Private Letters of Sir James Brooke, K.C.B., Rajah of* Sarawak, *Narrating the Events of his Life from 1838 to the Present Time,* I, London, 1853, pp. 314-16.

7. Leys, op. cit., p. 123,

8. Ibid., p. 125.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., pp, 126 7. 'lite other information or) taxes *is* taken front the Same source.

11. The *chukai serah* or 'surrender tax' was of the same amount and nature as the *chukai dagang.* The reasons for its existence or its particular significance are not clear.

12. Ibid , p. 128.

13. The situation changed in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the ruling Sultan sent his relative or pengiran to reside officially in the *kerajaan* and administer it. This break from the traditional system was to be of great significance, not only because it resulted in a large colony of Brunei Malays settling there, but also because it reduced the autonomy of the local Malays. Sweeney, op. cit., 25-6.

14. Ibid., p. 26.

15. See Map 1

16. For example, see Abang Yusuf Puteh, *Beberapa Segi Adat Perkahwinan Orang-orang Melayu Sarawak*, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Kuala Lumpur, 1964.

17. Ibid., p. 1.

18. Ibid., p. 2.

19. John Goatly, 'The Malays', in Harrisson (ed.), *The Peoples of Sarawak*, Sarawak Museum, Kuching, 1959, p. 106. See also Abang Yusuf Puteh, op. cit., p. 11.

20. Goatly, Ibid,, p. 107.

21. E. M. Loch, *Sumatra: Its History, and People,* Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1974, p. 208.

22. It is interesting to note that *abang* is spelt and sounds similar to *awang.* These terms are used in reference to young men, but James Brooke failed to find a suitable word for the young women and simply used the Brunei term, *dayang.*

23. Unless otherwise specified the term Dayak in this book refers to the non-Muslim tribes of Sarawak.

24. For the coming of and spread of Islam in Sarawak see Sanib Said, 'Islam di Sarawak: Sejarah Ringkas, 1476-1941', *Islam di Malaysia,* Monograph, Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia, Kualâ Lumpur, 1979, pp. 181-6. Also see B. Sandin, *The Sea Dayaks of Borneo,* Macmillan, London, 1967; T. Babcock, 'Indigenous Ethnicity in Sarawak', *SMJ* 7, XXII, 43, 1974, pp. 191-202.

25. T. Harrisson, *The Malays of South-west Sarawak Before White Rajah Rule,* Macmillan, London, 1970, Appendix II, p. 648.

26. Sandin, *The Sea Dayaks,* p. 76. See also Babcock, op. cit., and D. Bailey, 'The Sru Dayaks', in A. Richard (ed.), *The Sea Dayaks and Other Races in Sarawak,* BLB, 1968, pp. 331-40.

27. Sandin, *The Sea Dayaks,* p. 76.

28, T. Kuboy, 'The Blium', *SMJ*, 34-5, 1969, pp. 155-9.

29. Julaihi Bujang, 'Aspek-aspek Kebudayaan Orang Miri dan Kedayan', *JHMS*, 3, 1976, pp. 29-40.

30. Sweeney, op. cit., p. 27. It is interesting to note that gold was not known to exist in this area although sago was abundant.

31. See J. Satem, 'The Changing Nature of Sarawak's Export Trade from 1841 to the Present', *SG*, July 1970, pp. 137-9.

32. S. Morris, *Report on the Melanau Sago Producing Community in Sarawak,* HMSO, London, 1953, p. 12.

33. Ibid.

34. T. Harrisson, 'Summing Up: Sarawak People', in T.Harrisson (ed.), *The Peoples of Sarawak,* p. 130. Also see Awang Ahmad, 'Bahasa Kedayan Dalam Satu Penggolongan Dengan Bahasa Melayu Berunai', *Dewan Bahasa,* DBP, Kuala Lumpur 1978.

35. See Harrisson (ed.), ibid., p. 130.

36. Sweeney, of). cit., p. 11. See also Sanib Said, 'Islam di Sarawak: Sejarah Ringkas, 1476-1941', *Islam di Malaysia,* Monograph, Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 1979.

37. See C. Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak,* Tinsley Bros, London, 1886, p. 110; and R. Pringle, *Rajahs and Rebels: The Ibans of Sarawak under Brooke Rule,* 1841-1941, Macmillan, London, 1970, pp. 60-1.

38. See Abang Yusuf Puteh, op. cit., pp. 14-19. He is the first researcher to identify the presence of social classes in the Malay society in Sarawak. But he is primarily concerned with modern society rather than the traditional one, and as a result he has overlooked the traditional middle class.

39. Further details are given in Pringle, *Rajahs and Rebels,* pp. 18-37,

40. N. Tarling, *Piracy and Politics in the Malay World,* Donald Moore Gallery, Singapore, 1963, p. 10.

2
Sarawak Before and During the Second World War

JAMES BROOKE and the 'dynasty' which he founded in Sarawak, seen in the larger context of the Malay world, was just another of those Malay kingdoms that mark the history of the archipelago. In the case of Sarawak, James was a lucky adventurer of ambition who managed to supplant the sway of the decaying sultanate of Brunei in that province. The significant element in his effort at building a kingdom was the support given by a strong section of the local population, namely the non-Brunei Malays and Dayaks. Without this support, James Brooke and his early European followers would not have been able to withstand the opposition from the pro-Brunei faction. The kingdom founded by James Brooke was basically the same as any other Malay state, except for the fact that it was headed by a white man and a Christian.

James Brooke was not styled 'sultan', but 'rajah' or king. This was a term more acceptable to the local population as it had no Islamic connotation. However, it is interesting to note that James Brooke did not immediately use it; for some years, he styled himself as simply 'Tuan Besar' (Great Lord).[1] Only later did he adopt the title 'Rajah', and then other Malay titles were also employed by members of his family such as *Raja Muda* for heir presumptive and *Tuan Muda* for the next male in line. The female members had their titles too–*Dayang Ranee* for the wife of the Rajah and *Dayang Muda* for the spouse of the *Tuan Muda.* Generally, these were patterned after the Brunei system for newly-created titles. Traditional Malay ceremonial and usage were observed by the Brookes. The Rajah's residence was called the *astana* (palace); the use of the Malay colour for royalty, yellow, was reserved for

the Brookes. Malay was made the official medium of instruction and became a kind of national language during the rule of the second Rajah, Charles Brooke.[2] During his time, he made sure that every European officer learned the language. The Brookes themselves could write *Jawi* and speak very fluently. But, the importance of the Malays within the Brooke political-administrative framework gradually diminished during the twentieth century; they were replaced by Europeans.

From the very beginning, the appearance of James Brooke on the Sarawak political scene was observed with suspicion by the Brunei Malays as well as by the local chiefs. One of them, Pengiran Indera Mahkota Muhammad Salleh, took an instant dislike for James Brooke and his European followers, and the hatred and animosity between him and James Brooke lasted throughout their lives. During the administration of James Brooke, the newly-founded kingdom was almost destroyed several times, especially in the 1850s. In 1857, Kuching fell into Chinese hands for a few days and was only recaptured with the help of the Malays and the Ibans. Anti-Brooke Malay leaders also attempted on three occasions to overthrow the white dynasty.

The first step taken by James Brooke to consolidate his position as the new ruler of' Sarawak was to repatriate all the Brunei pengiran from Kuching, many of whom were followers of Raja Tengah and Muhammad Salleh.[3] With the presence of the Brunei pengiran and their followers, James Brooke felt threatened and insecure; even his so-called friend, Raja Muda Hashim, was suspected of intriguing against him.[4] Pengiran Indera Mahkota Muhammad, former governor of Sarawak, was ordered to leave Sarawak as early as 1843, followed by Raja Muda Hashim a year later, together with the latter's followers.[6]

With the departure of the Brunei pengiran, James Brooke for the first time, felt himself to be the true 'Rajah'. Law and order was successfully maintained. His next target was to stamp out 'piracy' not only in his new kingdom but also throughout the whole area as far as Banjarmasin

and Marudu Bay. Between 1844 and 1850, James Brooke, with the unofficial help of the English East India Company and the British navy, zealously attacked numerous 'pirate centres', killing thousands. Many saw this as another heroic achievement in James Brooke's career, but others condemned him for perpetrating atrocity and massacre. His critics eventually succeeded in bringing Brooke in 1854 before an official court of inquiry held in Singapore. Brooke was exonerated, but the legend was exploded and his morale shattered.

Before James Brooke could recover his sagging morale, the Chinese overran and captured Kuching in 1857. The so-called 'Chinese Uprising' was only suppressed by armies of Iban and Malays under the command of Charles Brooke. The Rajah was lucky to escape but one of his English companions was decapitated. The Chinese thought that it was the head of the Rajah himself, and joyously paraded it round the town to the horror of the surviving Europeans.

Malay Uprisings

The anti-Brooke Malay chiefs did not leave James Brooke in peace either. In 1853, 1857 and again in 1860 they plotted uprisings to overthrow the white regime.[7] The leaders of the Malays were in fact Brooke's native officials–Datu Haji Abdul Gapur and Sharif Mashor of Sarekei. They had been appointed as part of Brooke's policy to secure the help of the local Malay chiefs. Datu Haji Abdul Gapur was one of those who had rebelled against Pengiran Indera Mahkota Muhammad Salleh in 1837; he was saved and subsequently reinstated by James Brooke after the rebellion. He was also the son-in-law of Datu Patinggi Ali, the most senior datu of the Sarawak Malays.[8] In 1844, Datu Patinggi Ali was killed in one of James Brooke's anti-piracy campaign, at Patusan and Datu Haji Gapur was elevated to the rank of Datu Patinggi, a position

he held until 1854. In addition, Haji Abdul Gapur was the first *imam* of the *Masjid Besar* (the state mosque), Kuching, from 1851 to 1854. He was stripped of the title of Datu Patinggi by James Brooke for planning to overthrow the government the previous year.

Sharif Mashor was a close friend, and later became the brother-in-law, of Datu Haji Abdul Gapur. His background remains obscure. It is believed that he was born in Igan, one of the rich sago centres of the Rejang Delta.[10] In 1849 Sharif Mashor took over the governorship of the Sarekei-Rejang river system from a certain Datu Patinggi Abdul Rahman, an appointment later approved by the Sultan of Brunei. In 1851 Sharif Mashor became a relative of Haji Abdul Gapur when his brother, Sharif Bujang, to the disgust of the Brookes, married the Kuching chief's daughter, Fatima.[12] He proved to be a charismatic and brave leader of the Malays and Iban; many believed that he possessed magical powers. Even in times of stress, he could approach his enemies with charm. Spenser St. John, the British consul in Brunei and former private secretary of James Brooke, wrote of him: 'Masahor [Sharif Mashor] himself came in, naked to the waist which looked anything but peaceful, with his kris ready for action. He came and sat down by my side.... He was a fine man, with a heavy, though in general a smiling, sympathetic expression.... We had been old and familiar friends in days gone by.....'[13] The European community liked Sharif Mashor too: 'We all liked him. He appeared to seek European society, and by the hour would stand listening to Mrs. McDougall [wife of the Bishop of Sarawak] playing the piano; at other times he was a diligent attendant at our chess club, and many a tough game we had together.'[14] Hence nobody suspected him of plotting to overthrow the Brooke regime.

However, in late 1853, Haji Abdul Gapur engineered an uprising of the Sarawak Malays against the Brookes. The plan was to get the Europeans together to strike one treacherous blow [15] and then take over Sarawak. Early in 1854, Haji Gapur conducted 'odd proceedings

and military movements without being suspected'.[16] A few months later, the opportunity came when Haji Gapur with his men accompanied James Brooke and his nephew, Captain Brooke Brooke, on a trip to the Batang Lupar. Haji Gapur was to attack them at a lonely spot. However, a traitor, the eldest son of Datu Temenggong, Abang Patah, divulged the plan to Spenser St. John who was visiting Kuching at that time.[17] St. John immediately sent a letter to James Brooke's party, warning them of Haji Gapur's intentions. On his return to Kuching, James Brooke denounced Haji Gapur in front of his datu friends and stripped him of the title of Datu Patinggi. As a further punishment, his 'property, guns, *lelah* [Malay cannon], musket and powder were confiscated and [he was] banished to Mecca'.[18] Sharif Mashor's role, in this instance, was not clear; he was nevertheless banned from entering Sarawak. In 1857, both of them were forgiven by James Brooke, since they helped the government quell the Chinese Rebellion, but Haji Abdul Gapur was not reinstated in his former position.[19]

But Sharif Mashor and Haji Gapur did not forget nor forgive James Brooke. In 1859, the two leaders hatched another plot to overthrow the Brooke dynasty. They plotted simultaneous uprisings in four towns, namely Kanowit, Sarekei, Lundu and Kuching. The main object of these uprisings was to kill all Europeans.[21] News of the plan spread but James Brooke and his officers treated lightly.[22] On 25 June 1859, while James Brooke and Brooke Brooke were vacationing in England, having left Sarawak under the command of Charles Brooke, Sharif Mashor's followers attacked Fort Kanowit and killed two white officers, Charles Fox and Henry Steele.[23] It was intended that the attack should be followed by uprisings in the other towns but the plan misfired because of the swift action taken by Charles Brooke who immediately executed more than ten men without trial and burnt down the longhouse belonging to the Kanowits. [24] Once again the plan failed and Haji Abdul Gapur was banished to Singapore and Sharif Mashor to Kota Batu.[25]

The death of Charles Fox and Henry Steele and the discovery of the plot spread terror among the Europeans in Sarawak. They believed it was a Muslim revolt against the Christian Europeans. It was said that:

> The gentlemen, to a man, stuck to their posts with firmness, and rode out the storm ... the second class lost courage; while the Bishop and some of the missionaries left, the former taking home news that a Mohammedan plot, with Datu [Imam] (the rival Mohammedan Bishop) at the head of it ....[26]

The Christian bishop was so frightened that he recommended to his superiors in England that missionary work be withdrawn from Sarawak.

The two abortive revolts did not discourage the two men. Some months later, they were found making new preparations. Somehow Haji Gapur had succeeded in escaping to Pontianak, not too far away from Kuching, in Dutch territory; there he established communication with his friend, Sharif Mashor, who had returned to his home town of Sarekei in 1860. Mashor summoned several Malay and Iban chiefs to confer on the subject of wiping out the Brooke dynasty. The proposal was unanimously accepted by the chiefs. As a preliminary strategy, Sharif Mashor's Iban slave was to pose as the Brunei Temenggong.[27] The imposter was instructed to foment unrest in the Malay and Iban areas surrounding Kuching. He was successful. According to Charles Brooke,

> The people's minds had been prepared for this false prophet to oppose the present government of Sarawak. The countries he had passed through were now in an excited state, and drilled with every kind of false report. Some of the headmen declared they were ready to live and die in support of the imposter's claim.... [The kris] in his possession was for the purpose of cutting all the white men in Sarawak.[28]

The campaign was to be carried to Pontianak where the imposter was to meet Haji Gapur, and together with their large Malay and Iban following they would then proceed to attack Kuching by land while Sharif Mashor's party would attack from the sea.

The Sarawak Government (under Charles Brooke) and the Kuching population heard rumours of the attack. The local people all along knew of the plan, but Charles Brooke and the other Europeans were disinclined to believe them. Nevertheless, the atmosphere wase tense; Charles Brooke had to declare an emergency and a curfew was imposed on Kuching town while alarming news spread further. Charles Brooke wrote:

> [A] report came to me that Datu Hadji had been concerting plan with a Sibuyau Dyak chief, to be in readiness at a certain time with his people, to *amok* into the fort of Sarawak [Kuching], and take the heads of all those who resisted. The same Dyak who had been heard to say, on several occasions, that the white men would not remain long as leaders; he attended supporting the Datu Hadji and Brunei Rajahs against the rule of strangers.[29]

Charles Brooke ordered all the Europeans to be armed and alert and he also put the loyal Kuching Malays in readiness.

However, before Sharif Mashor could enter Kuching, a pro-Brooke Pengiran (Matusin) from Mukah timely informed of Sharif Masahor's departure from Sarekei. So in February 1860, Charles Brooke at once took command of an armed squadron and successfully intercepted Sharif Mashor at the mouth of the Sarawak River. He chased his adversaries into the Sadong River before his party opened fire. Sharif Mashor managed to escape unhurt but his men suffered heavy losses. Meanwhile Haji Gapur and his Iban companion, had run into trouble as well. Before they could proceed to Kuching, they were arrested by the Dutch authorities at Pontianak; the former was sent to the Batavia gaol while the latter was sent back to Kuching. Not long after that, Haji Gapur was exiled to Malacca and Sharif Mashor to Singapore. But this did not stop them from continuing their struggle. Sharif Mashor attempted to intrigue against the Brooke government from his

Singapore exile and he even managed to sail to Pontianak. However, on this occasion, he could not get any native leaders in Kuching to support him. He died in 1890, still an adversary of the Brooke regime.[30] His death also signalled the end of Malay opposition to Brooke rule in Sarawak..

Brooke Divide-and-Rule Policy

Brooke administrative and political police were largely shaped by the country's poorly developed economy and lack of international status. The kingdom of the Brooke regime could be described as the 'illegitimate child' of British imperialism; it was 'within the British imperial system without being part of it'.[31] In other words, it can be said that Sarawak was a private colony of an English family in contrast to other colonies which were under direct imperial control. It is also important to note that the Brooke regime did not operate as a chartered company as, was the case in British North Borneo (Sabah). In fact, the Brooke regime showed similarities, in many respects, to the average Malay sultanate.[32] The Brooke administrative system at first made use of the existing Malay political machinery, but later it conformed more and more to Western bureaucratic practices. If the Brooke government had a policy, it was the broad one of keeping peace and order and to ensure the survival of the kingdom.

When Sarawak, by 1890, had territorially expanded into the Brunei sultanate, leaving two small enclaves for the Sultan, it was divided first into four, and later, five administrative units known as Divisions. The First Division included the Sarawak and Sadong river systems with Kuching as the headquarters; the Second Division comprised the Batang Lupar, Saribas and Kalaka river systems with Simanggang as the headquarters; the Third Division comprised Rejang, Oya and Mukah,

with its headquarters at Sibu; and the Fourth Division, made up of the Baram and Trusan rivers with its headquarters at Miri. In 1910 the Fifth Division was created at the expense of the Fourth, consisting of the Trusan, Limbang and Lawas rivers. Therefore, like the Brunei political system, the Brooke system was also based on the rivers. Each Division was further subdivided into districts, each one of which contained a number of villages.

Each Division was headed by a European officer styled Resident. He was directly responsible to the Rajah in Kuching and the importance of his office was largely symbolic; most of the admintrative work in each Division was handled by the Native Officer (known as NO), who were in most cases aristocratic Malays from Kuching. With the exception of the Resident of the First Division, the other Residents enjoyed considerable autonomy. The Rajah made only occasional visits to the outer districts.

The first Rajah, James Brooke, did not introduce elaborate governmental machinery, nor did he bring changes into the existing Malay system. Firstly, James Brooke did not want to stir up immediate opposition from the local Malay chiefs who were already there. Secondly, he shrewdly retained and raised the status of the Sarawak Malays to counteract the influence of the former ruling class of Brunei pengiran. Thirdly James Brooke, in some ways, was influenced by the humanitarianism and liberalism of his time. He perpetuated the offices and much of the authority of the three Sarawak Malay chiefs–the Datu Patinggi, Datu Temenggong and Datu Bandar. They were allowed to continue their traditional right of collecting taxes and duties from trade in their respective areas.[33] Unlike the Brunei Sultan, James Brooke permitted them to keep half the revenue; the other half was surrendered to the Rajah.[34]

However the monopoly of trade by the chiefs was tolerated by James Brooke for only a short period. It went completely against the

idea of free trade which he so often championed; he saw it as a form of 'oppression'. So, when after 1860 the revenues of Sarawak were sufficient, he decided to give the different chiefs fixed amounts per month as salary. [35]

When time and circumstances permitted, the functions of the datu were expanded, and the number of datu increased. In 1852 with the completion of the *Masjid Besar* of Sarawak in Kuching a *Datu Imam* was created., the first incumbent being the anti-Brooke Haji Abdul Gapur.[36] In 1886, the post of *Datu Hakim* (magistrate) was also created.[37]

During the time of James Brooke, the Malay datu played an important administrative role but gradually they became mere ceremonial functionaries, symbolizing Malay political authority. James Brooke depended on the datus' intimate knowledge of local society and military tactics to make political decisions in his campaign against 'piracy'. More important, he exploited their authority over the native population, particularly their ability to muster the Ibans. Their functions were formalized when James Brooke formed the Supreme Council to which they were appointed as life members, together with the Rajah as president and two other Europeans. There was a ruling that European members were not to exceed the native members who were mainly Malays. The aim of the Supreme Council was to consider all important matters of the state; the council met once a month or at any time during an emergency. However, in 1915 the role of the Council was greatly reduced when Vyner Brooke, the third Rajah, formed the Committee of Administration which, in many ways, duplicated its role and functions. This indicates that the opinions and abilities of the Malay datu were no longer required. The Committee of Administration consisted of eight senior European civil servants, two Chinese and two Malays, hence revealing how much political power the Malay leaders had lost. The role of the Supreme Council was further diminished when the Rajah failed to call any meetings between 1927 and 1941.[39]

The counterpart of the Supreme Council, the *Council Negri,* was formed in 1867 by Charles Brooke who was then the Tuan Muda. It was originally called the Sarawak General Council until 1903 when it became officially known as the Council Negri. The objectives of the Council, as stated in its standing orders, were:

> ... to deliberate on any matter of great importance to the population in general in the countries under Sarawak rule, or should any difficulty arise among the different people about laws and customs, giving rise to hindrances and disputes, the meeting of the members and majority of their bodies... 40

The Council Negri met every three years and this practice was strictly adhered to until the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941. However, the standing orders did not stipulate the composition of its membership. As in the case of the Supreme Council, the Malays once again formed the majority. The session which was held in Bintulu in 1867 was composed of the Tuan Muda, five Europeans and sixteen Malay aristocrats who were either pengiran or the abang of Kuching.[41] Two non-Malay leaders made their appearance in 1897.[42] In 1937, the Council became more representative of the people of Sarawak. A few Ibans were included and the Chinese were invited as observers.[43]

Brooke economic policy differed little from its political policy–it tended to go against Malay interests; it disapproved of European commercialism but encouraged and sponsored Chinese capitalism. European commercial participation in the Brooke kingdom for a long time was confined to the Borneo Company which was partly controlled by the government. The Brookes considered the commercial activities of the Malays politically unhealthy, regarding them as a form of 'oppression', so finally these activities were suppressed altogether.

For the Malays the coming of the Brookes and the Chinese marked the speedy demise of their commercial pursuits which they had been of such long standing. Before and during the earlier phase of Brooke rule,